

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

2 April 1986

Nicaragua:
The National Directorate TodaySummary

The nine-member National Directorate that controls the Sandinista regime takes care to maintain a balance among its three factions. The membership of the group has not changed since the July 1979 revolution that brought them to power, although Vice President Sergio Ramirez recently has begun attending some meetings and in the future might tip the balance if he sides with one group. Personal rivalries, differences in strategy, and some shifts in influence are apparent among the members, but the Directorate nevertheless displays a remarkable amount of unity. Decisions are made and announced on the basis of a consensus that overrides their differences. This approach is the same as that taken in 1979 by the leaders of the three factions when they united to take power, and it appears to be one that the comandantes will attempt to maintain in the future. In the near term, the unity of the nine probably is reinforced by the political, military, and economic challenges they face; in the long term, these same challenges may be their undoing.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Central America
Branch, Office of Central Reference. [redacted]

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[redacted] Comments and questions may be
directed to the Chief, Central American Branch [redacted]

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The Membership

The three power bases of the FSLN leaders that predated the 1979 takeover--the Terciarios, the Popular Prolonged War (GPP), and the Proletarian Tendency (TP)--continue to exist and to be reflected in the differing strategies of the members. In the mid-1970s personal animosities and differences of opinion over strategy had split the FSLN. The main body began calling itself the GPP and espoused the traditional Cuban strategy of launching guerrilla attacks from the mountains. The smallest of the factions, the TP, was expelled by the main body several years later because it opposed the random use of violence and advocated instead the use of selective violent acts. The Terciarios, the most ideologically diverse group, were expelled from the FSLN in 1977 because they believed that the insurrection should be broadened to include the anti-Somoza middle class. After a series of meetings with Cuba's Fidel Castro in 1979, the leaders agreed to unite. Since the revolution they have tried publicly to downplay the factions, but the way they continue to maintain a balance in the new committees and commissions they create indicates that the factions still exist.

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The portfolios of the nine members of the Directorate have not changed significantly during the past four years. The major figures--the Ortega brothers, Tomas Borge, and Jaime Wheelock--continue to hold the same posts and have added responsibilities. The responsibilities and status of the members, by faction, are as follows:

Terciarios

Daniel Ortega and his brother, Humberto, are the most important members of this faction. The head of the junta during 1979-84, Daniel was elected President in November 1984 and took office in January 1985. He also heads the National Planning Council, created in January 1985 to advise the Directorate on the economy, and is the coordinator of the recently formed five-man Executive Commission, which implements Directorate policies. He is described in the US and foreign press as "first among equals." He frequently travels abroad as the regime's number-one representative, and the US Embassy reports that he and his brother are among the more powerful and effective Directorate members.

Humberto Ortega retains the Defense portfolio and is also a member of the important Executive Commission. According to US Embassy officials, he is close to Cuba's Fidel Castro and has been the principal proponent of Nicaragua's arms buildup.

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[REDACTED]

Victor Tirado, who rarely makes public appearances, remains the Directorate member responsible for labor affairs, but has gained no additional responsibility.

[REDACTED] judging by his relatively limited responsibilities, we believe he is one of the least influential Directorate members.

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Popular Prolonged War

Tomas Borge leads this faction. He continues to hold the important Interior portfolio and is a member of the Executive Commission. He aspires to be sole leader of Nicaragua, but he has lost much of his popularity with the people because of his role in controlling and intimidating dissenters, according to US Embassy reporting.

Bayardo Arce, the ideologue of the Directorate, plays a major role in coordinating foreign policy. His level of influence remains roughly equal to Wheelock's; he is now also vice coordinator of the Executive Commission.

Henry Ruiz is the Directorate member with the most orthodox Marxist training. He was removed as Minister of Planning in 1985 (now those duties fall under Daniel Ortega in the Office of the Presidency) and given the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Cooperation, with responsibility for developing Nicaragua's foreign trade relations and gaining financial assistance. He is a member of the National Planning Council, but was not included on the Executive Commission.

Proletarian Tendency

Jaime Wheelock, the leader of this faction, has increased his stature because of the importance of the agrarian reform effort. He retains his agricultural portfolio and is now a member of both the National Planning Council and the Executive Commission.

Luis Carrion remains the Ministry of Interior's second-ranking official under Borge. Carrion has been tasked by the Directorate to coordinate and improve military and intelligence efforts in the northern part of Nicaragua near the Honduran border.

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Carlos Nunez continues to serve as president of the Nicaragua's rubberstamp legislature. One of the least influential of the Directorate members, [REDACTED]

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The Tenth Comandante

Vice President Ramirez, who is not a member of the Directorate, has emerged during the past year as one of the principal Sandinista strategists. He apparently attends Directorate meetings on invitation, and some political observers have begun calling him the tenth comandante. Ramirez appears to be pragmatic in outlook, tries to maintain a neutral posture and does not get involved in factional disagreements.

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Well educated, articulate, and bright, Ramirez was an author before he joined the junta that was formed when the FSLN came to power in 1979. He describes himself as sympathetic to Marxism and probably owes his current post to Daniel Ortega, who served with him on the junta. Ramirez is a member of the National Planning Council and frequently chairs the meetings in the President's absence. In addition, Ortega has designated him to oversee the maintenance of roads, bridges, and communications--a job that requires coordinating the work of the various ministries and local governments. Ramirez also has been given responsibility for the educational and criminal justice systems and is often assigned sensitive foreign policy tasks such as representing the President abroad. [REDACTED]

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Internal Rivalries Unchanged...

[REDACTED] strong personal rivalries--derived from policy differences and personalities--remain among the leaders of the factions, especially between the Ortega brothers and Borge. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] differences of view among members of the Directorate regarding policies or the implementation of policies. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Embassy reporting continues to indicate that Ruiz and Wheelock remain at odds with each other because of their inability to get along personally. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

... But not in Public

Whatever the nature of personality and policy differences, they occur in private; Directorate members firmly and publicly support a policy line once it is established. For example, while we believe that the Ortega brothers and Borge continue to have strong differences of opinion, we find no evidence in policy actions or public statements to reflect these differences. Even on those occasions when members of the Directorate appear to take opposing public positions--for example, relatively moderate statements by Daniel Ortega and hardline actions taken by Borge--we may be seeing two faces of the same policy--one for public consumption, the other for solving the problem at hand. [REDACTED]

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Consensus Prevails

The FSLN came to power in 1979 because the three revolutionary factions were able to suppress their differences and unite their forces. During the past seven years one of the most significant features of the Directorate has been its careful attention to maintaining this balance of power among the FSLN's factions. This is seen in the composition of the five-man FSLN Executive Commission, which includes two representatives from the Terciario faction, two from the GPP, and one from the TP. It is also seen in the makeup of the National Planning Council, which has one directorate member from each faction, as well as Ramirez and several technocrats.

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Outlook

On the basis of [REDACTED] Embassy reporting, we believe that the lesson of Grenada is firmly fixed in the minds of the ruling Sandinistas. They know that in that situation the split between New Jewel Party leaders Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard resulted in Coard turning on Bishop, Bishop's assassination, and the eventual US invasion. The determination of the comandantes in Nicaragua to remain in power explains their track record of unity. We believe that the Directorate will attempt to maintain a balanced membership and its consensus style of decisionmaking in the future. In the near term, at least, their track record suggests that they will succeed. [REDACTED]

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The ability of the Sandinistas to maintain this remarkable degree of unity over the longer term is obviously much less certain. With military pressures growing, the economy declining, and Western aid donors increasingly reluctant to

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provide continued assistance, the Directorate has fewer options available to solve its problems. In the long term, this lack of maneuverability may exacerbate existing frictions and could lead to splits within the Directorate. In addition, some rifts within the Directorate could occur if Ramirez--the new and increasingly important player--abandons his neutral stance and sides with one of the factions. [REDACTED]

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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DIRECTORATE

Name	Age	Position(s)	Date Joined FSLN	FSLN Faction Affiliation	Education	Other
(Jose) Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra (Phonetic: orTAYga)	40	President (since 1/85); Coordinator, FSLN Executive Commission (since 8/85); head, National Planning Council, (since 1985)	mid-1960s	Terciaro	Attended UNAN	Member, Government of National Reconstruction Junta, 7/79-1/85; Junta Coordinator, 3/81-1/85; married to Rosario Murillo, General Secretary of the Sandinista Associ- ation of Cultural Workers
Humberto ORTEGA Saavedra (Phonetic: orTAYga)	c. 44	Minister of Defense (since 12/79); Commander in Chief, Sandinista Popular Army (since 8/79); Commander, Sandinista People's Militia (since 7/81); member, FSLN Executive Commission (since 8/85)	mid-1960s	Terciaro	Attended UNAN	Received military training in North Korea
Victor Manuel TIRADO Lopez (Phonetic: teeRAHdoh)	c. 45	Directorate member respon- sible for labor affairs (since 7/79)	1964	Terciaro	No formal higher education	Born in Mexico; Nicaraguan citizen since 1/79
Tomas BORGE Martinez (Phonetic: BORhay)	56	Minister of Interior (since 7/79); member, FSLN Execu- tive Commission (since 8/85); president, Com- mission for Autonomy for Atlantic Coast (since 8/85)	July 1961 (a founder)	Popular Prolonged War	Studied law at UNAN	Received guerrilla training in Cuba and Lebanon
Bayardo ARCE Castano (Phonetic: ARsay)	36	Vice Coordinator, FSLN Executive Commission (since 8/85); Directorate foreign affairs coordinator (since 7/79); controls FSLN's international relations department	1971	Popular Prolonged War	Journalism degree, National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN)	Coordinator, FSLN Political Commission (now Executive Commission), 1980-85

A Brief Overview of the Directorate (cont.)

Name	Age	Position(s)	Date Joined FSLN	FSLN Faction Affiliation	Education	Other
Henry Ildefonso RUIZ (Phonetic: rooEES)	42	Minister of Foreign Cooperation (since 1/85); member, National Planning Council (since 1985)	late 1960s	Popular Prolonged War	Attended Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow; expelled, allegedly for touting radical ideas	Minister of Planning, 12/79-1/85; received training from Palestine Liberation Organization
Jaime Stanley WHEELock Roman (Phonetic: weeLOKE)	38	Minister of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform (since 1979); member, FSLN Executive Commission (since 8/85); member, National Planning Council (since 1985)	late 1960s	Proletarian Tendency	Studied law at UNAH and in Chile	Married to Vanessa Castro, head of FSLN Political Education Department; brother, Ricardo, head of Military Intelligence (since 10/85)
Luis CARRION Cruz (Phonetic: cahreeOHN)	c. 33	First Vice Minister of Interior (since 1/85)	1970	Proletarian Tendency	Attended Phillips Exeter Academy (New Hampshire), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (New York), and UNAH	Vice Minister of Defense, 7/79-4/80; Vice Minister of Interior (4/80-7/85); brother, Carlos, and sister, Gloria, are FSLN regional representatives; a cousin, Javier, is a deputy chief of staff of the Sandinista Popular Army
Carlos NUNEZ Tellez (Phonetic: NOONyehs)	34	President, National Assembly (since 1/85)	early 1970s	Proletarian Tendency		Head, FSLN Propaganda and Political Education Department, early 1980s; President, Council of State (now National Assembly), 9/80-12/85; brother, Rene, is Minister of the Presidency and head, FSLN Secretariat of General Affairs